

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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DEPARTMENT PASS AID

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, LE, US

SUBJECT: VISIT OF US TECHNICAL TEAM - CALL ON PRESIDENT SARKIS

1. SUMMARY. DURING 45 MINUTE MEETING WITH US TECHNICAL TEAM JAN 15, PRESIDENT SARKIS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR USG HELP IN GOL RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT AND TEAM LEADER RICHARDSON DISCUSSED TEAM'S WORK DURING PAST WEEK AND ITS PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT SARKIS RECEIVED US TECHNICAL TEAM, ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE LANE, AT 0900 JAN 15. GOL MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND HOUSING SALMAN AND ISSAM HAIDAR, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WERE ALSO PRESENT.

3. PRESIDENT SARKIS WELCOMED THE TEAM, THANKED THEM FOR THEIR EFFORTS AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THEIR WORK WOULD LEAD TO EVEN CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND LEBANON. HE SAID HE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE ANY HELP USG CAN PROVIDE, NOT ONLY FOR MATERIAL BENEFIT DERIVED, BUT ALSO AS SIGN OF US FAITH IN LEBANON.

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SARKIS REVIEWED WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION THAT HAS OCCURRED DURING PAST TWO YEARS AND SAID COUNTRY NEEDS COMPLETE REBUILDING IN BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS. WHILE STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF REESTABLISHING SECURITY, HE SAID THAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS WERE TIME BOMBS THAT COULD EXPLODE IF THEY WERE NOT PROMPTLY DIFFUSED. SARKIS THEN REFERRED TO THREE AREAS ON WHICH TEAM HAD CONCENTRATED, EMERGENCY RELIEF, THE

PORT OF BEIRUT, AND HOUSING, ASKED TEAM LEADER RICHARDSON TO SUMMARIZE THEIR FINDINGS.

4. AFTER THANKING PRESIDENT AND INTRODUCING TEAM MEMBERS, RICHARDSON BRIEFLY REVIEWED BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF US MISSION'S VISIT. HE SAID THAT HIS GROUP WILL BE SUBMITTING A REPORT IDENTIFYING NOT ONLY THOSE AREAS OF MOST IMMEDIATE NEED BUT ALSO DESCRIBING LEBANON'S LONG-TERM REQUIREMENTS. RICHARDSON REVIEWED AID THAT USG HAS ALREADY PROVIDED TO LEBANON, BOTH DIRECTLY AND THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND SAID THAT, IN ADDITION, TEAM WOULD BE RECOMMENDING AN EXPANSION OF US EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE UPON ITS RETURN TO WASHINGTON. THE TEAM BELIEVES THAT PROMPTNESS OF US RESPONSE COULD BE VERY IMPORTANT AND THEREFORE IN REPORT TEAM WILL IDENTIFY PROJECTS IN WHICH QUICK US DECISIONS ARE POSSIBLE. AREAS THAT WILL BE EMPHASIZED WILL INCLUDE: 1) PL 480 TITLE I FOOD ASSISTANCE; 2) VARIOUS OPTIONS FOR EMERGENCY AID TO THE PORT OF BEIRUT; 3) AREAS FOR POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE IN THE HOUSING FIELD; AND 4) OTHER IMMEDIATE RELIEF AND REHABILITATION NEEDS THAT WERE DISCUSSED DURING TEAM'S VISIT. TEAM'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS WILL REFLECT PRIORITIES DISCUSSED BY GOL DURING TEAM'S REVIEW. RICHARDSON SAID THAT THE TEAM HAD GATHERED A GREAT DEAL OF USEFUL INFORMATION DURING ITS SHORT STAY IN LEBANON, THANKS TO THE WHOLEHEARTED COOPERATION OF THE GOL. RICHARDSON EMPHASIZED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD LEBANON'S URGENT NEED FOR ASSISTANCE IN SOME AREAS AND WOULD STRESS IN HIS REPORT THAT THE USG SHOULD ACT PROMPTLY TO REVIEW TEAM'S REPORT AND REACH DECISION ON ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.

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5. RICHARDSON SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT LEBANON'S NEEDS ARE TOO GREAT FOR ONE DONOR, AND THAT ANY ASSISTANCE CONTEMPLATED BY U.S. WOULD HAVE TO BE COORDINATED WITH OTHER PROSPECTIVE DONORS. USG WAS AWARE OF GOL CONTACTS WITH OTHER DONORS AND HOPED THAT THESE CONTACTS WOULD BE FRUITFUL SINCE NATURE OF USG RESPONSE WOULD DEPEND TO SOME EXTENT ON ACTIONS OF OTHER DONORS. RICHARDSON SUGGESTED THAT FURTHER DEFINITION BY GOL OF SPECIFIC NEEDS (I.E., AT THE PROJECT LEVEL) IN CONTEXT OF DETAILED GOVERNMENT REDEVELOPMENT PLANS WOULD FACILITATE CONSIDERATION/RESPONSES BY PROSPECTIVE DONORS INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES. USG WOULD ALSO BE FOLLOWING CLOSELY ACTIONS THAT GOL ITSELF WOULD TAKE TO GET RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS UNDERWAY, SUCH AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND THE STRENGTHENING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REVENUE COLLECTION EFFORTS. SUCH MEASURES WOULD DEMONSTRATE TO PROSPECTIVE DONORS THAT THEIR AID WOULD BE USED EFFECTIVELY. RICHARDSON REFESSED TO CONCEPT MENTIONED BY PRIMIN AL-HOSS OF USING LONG-TERM LOW INTEREST LOANS TO FINANCE

RECONSTRUCTION, AND INDICATED THAT USG WOULD BEAR THIS IN MIND AS PLANNING CONTINUES TO DEFINE WHAT US ROLE SHOULD AND COULD BE IN THESE EFFORTS.

6. SARKIS REPLIED THAT LEBANON HAS A BILL TO PAY WHICH AMOUNTS TO SOME 15 BILLION LEBANESE POUNDS. THE GOL IS PREPARED TO MAKE A START BUT CANNOT PAY IT ALL OR ITS CURRENCY WILL COLLAPSE AND THE COUNTRY FALL INTO RUIN. THE PRIVATE SECTOR ALONE HAD LOST SOME 2 BILLION DOLS AND WAYS MUST BE FOUND TO PROVIDE LONG-TERM LOW INTEREST LOANS, TO ENABLE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO REBUILD AND AT THE SAME TIME PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR THE POPULATION. SARKIS AGAIN THANKED THE TEAM FOR ITS EFFORTS AND SAID HE WOULD BE LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING ABOUT THE RESULTS OF WASHINGTON'S REVIEW OF THE TEAM'S REPORT.
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